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BHARTI, WARBURG PINCUS BUY 49% STAKE IN HAIER INDIA FOR $2 BN

Bharti Enterprises and Warburg Pincus said in a statement on Wednesday that they are making a strategic investment in Haier India

MANAGEMENT CONTROL IN CHINESE HANDS

The management control will continue to remain with China-based Haier Group, which will retain 49% stake in Haier India after the deal, down from 100%. The deal may provide reprieve from Press Note 3. Through PN3, the Centre had made its prior approval mandatory for investments from countries that share a land border with India, which includes China

RELIANCE, JSW GROUP WERE IN THE FRAY

- The announcement puts a curtain on a hotly contested race in which JSW group and Reliance Industries were participating | P15
- The new capital infusion is expected to enhance Haier India's competitiveness at a time when the company is aiming to be the number two player in the Indian electronics and appliances market

₹17,955 cr

THE SIZE OF THE DEAL AS PER INDUSTRY SOURCES

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

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Two new airlines get wings from govt

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

AIR travellers are set to have more options as three new domestic airlines prepare to launch operations. Two carriers—Al Hind Air and FlyExpress—received their No Objection Certificates from the civil aviation ministry this week, while Uttar Pradesh-based Shankh Air, which already has an NOC, is likely to begin flights in 2026.

The development gains significance following IndiGo's operational meltdown in early December, which drew sharp criticism over the apparent duopoly in India's domestic aviation market. The aviation ministry is keen to have more airline operators in the country, which is one of the world's fastest growing domestic civil aviation markets.

"Over the last one week, pleased to have met teams from new airlines aspiring to take wings in Indian skies- Shankh Air, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress. While Shankh Air has already got the NOC from the Ministry, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress have received their NOCs this week," Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said on X.

The ministry wants to encourage more airlines in Indian aviation sector, which is amongst the fastest growing international aviation markets.

> **Over the last one week, pleased to have met teams from new airlines aspiring to take wings in Indian skies — Shankh Air, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress**
>
> —Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu on X

Al Hind Air is being promoted by Kerala-based alhind Group, which was founded in the 1990s.

Schemes like UDAN have enabled smaller carriers Star Air, India One Air and Fly91 to play an important role in the regional connectivity within the country and there is scope for further growth, he added.

Currently, there are nine operational domestic carriers in the country: Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo, Alliance Air, Akasa Air, SpiceJet, Star Air, Fly91 and IndiaOne Air, as per data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

EXPRESS READ

One killed in crude bomb explosion in Dhaka

Dhaka: Amid the ongoing unrest in Bangladesh, a person was killed in a crude bomb explosion in Dhaka on Wednesday. Witnesses said unidentified men hurled the bomb from a flyover in front of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad, the central office of 1971 Liberation War veterans, in Dhaka's Moghbazar area. Police said the deceased was a private shop employee who was having tea at a stall under the flyover.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

For the record, this is big

On any other day former India captains Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli scoring hundreds in Vijay Hazare ties would have been the talking points. But not on Wednesday as three fastest List A centuries were scored.

22 CENTURIES

As many as 22 centuries were scored on Day 1, the most in VH history. Previously, 19 tons were scored on Dec 12, 2021 and Jan 3, 2025

38 TOTAL SIXES

Hit by Bihar is by far the most in a men's List A innings as they posted 574/6, the highest ever List A total

3 FASTEST HUNDREDS

Ishan Kishan followed his T20 World Cup call-up with a 33-ball 100 against Karnataka as Jharkhand post 412. Karnataka raced to a five-wicket win. Sensational **Vaibhav Suryawanshi** hit a 36-ball 100 against Arunachal Pradesh. But his teammate **Sakibul Gani** eclipsed all with a 32-ball 100 to help Bihar post 574 for 6 | P17

14 YR, 272 DAYS
Suryawanshi became the youngest to score a List A hundred

● To challenge Sengar's bail ● Meets Rahul, gets promise of top lawyer

Unnao survivor to approach SC seeking justice

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

A day after the Delhi High Court suspended the life sentence awarded by a trial court to former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case, the survivor on Wednesday said she would move the Supreme Court.

On Wednesday, she and her mother staged a protest near Mandi House against the HC verdict.

Earlier in the day, the duo met Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi after alleging ill-treatment by Delhi Police. On Tuesday night, the survivor and her mother were reportedly forcefully removed by police from a protest site near India Gate.

Speaking to the media, she said no one from the government came forward to help her while Rahul Gandhi promised to get a top lawyer to fight the case in the Supreme Court.

The survivor said the HC's decision to suspend Sengar's jail term is *kaal* (death) for her family. "If the convict gets bail in a case like this, how will the country's daughters remain safe? For us, this decision is no less than kaal," she said.

In its order on Tuesday, the HC granted bail to Sengar with conditions. It directed him not to come within a 5-km radius of the survivor's residence. Sengar, who is currently in jail, will not be immediately released as he is also serving a 10-year term in the custodial death case of the survivor's father. He is yet to get bail in that case.

> **We will go to the Supreme Court and have sought Rahulji's help**
>
> Unnao rape survivor

The survivor was a minor when she was kidnapped and raped by Sengar in 2017.

Deploring the alleged ill treatment meted out to the survivor during her protest in Delhi, Rahul Gandhi said she is being punished for seeking justice. "Is such treatment of a gang-rape survivor appropriate? The fact that her perpetrator has been granted bail is extremely disappointing and shameful—especially when the survivor is being repeatedly harassed and is living under the shadow of fear," he said in a social media post. "Bail for rapists and treating survivors like criminals—what kind of justice is this?" he asked.

File photo of Kuldeep Singh Sengar being taken away from the CBI court in Lucknow on April 14, 2018 | PTI

Survivor seeks relocation to a Congress-ruled state

Sources said the Unnao rape survivor told Rahul and Sonia Gandhi that she, along with her family, would like to relocate to a Congress-ruled state as they fear persecution in Uttar Pradesh. The Gandhis assured her family that they will do everything in their capacity to ensure that they get justice and security, sources said

We may be turning into a dead society, says Rahul

Deploring the ill-treatment meted out to the rape survivor during her protest in Delhi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said she deserves respect, safety and justice. "We are not just becoming a dead economy—with such inhuman incidents, we are also turning into a dead society," he said

'BAHUBALI' LAUNCHES HEAVIEST SATELLITE ON ISRO RECORD

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

THE Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Wednesday launched the heaviest satellite so far after its Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3)-M6 rocket lifted off with the 6.10-tonne BlueBird-6 Block-2 communication satellite of US-based AST SpaceMobile (AST and Science, LLC) and released it accurately in a in the 518.50 Km altitude circular Low Earth Orbit (LEO). The launch took place at 8.55 am and the satellite released in its orbit at 9.11 am in what ISRO scientists described as a "textbook launch".

The heaviest satellite that ISRO has launched so far was the 4.40-tonne Communication Satellite 03 – also known as GSAT-7R – in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) on November 2, 2025 to provide the Indian Navy with secure, advanced multi-band maritime communication for ships, submarines and aircraft across the Indian Ocean Region. It replaced the older GSAT-7 (Rukmini) satellite.

The LVM3-M6/BlueBird Block-2 Mission was executed from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota. The launch was a commercial deal between ISRO's business arm NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) and US-based AST SpaceMobile (AST and Science, LLC)

ISRO's LVM3-M6 blasts off with the BlueBird Block-2 satellite from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Wednesday | ISRO

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said this was the third commercial launch undertaken by ISRO using the LVM3 launcher and the first dedicated to a foreign customer for communication purposes. It was also the ninth launch mission of the LVM3 rocket – nicknamed "Bahubali" – all of which have been successful. LVM3-M4 carried India's historic Chandrayaan-3 lunar mission in July 2023, which recorded the country's first successful touchdown of the unmanned lunar spacecraft on August 23, 2023 – a feat which also recorded India as the first among nations to have landed near the lunar South Pole.

The LVM3-M6, also known as the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)-MkIII, is a three-stage rocket with a cryogenic engine designed and developed by ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre. It uses two S200 solid rocket boosters to provide enormous thrust required for the lift-off with heavier payloads. P7

> **A significant stride in India's space sector ... a proud milestone in India's space journey. It strengthens India's heavy-lift launch capability and reinforces our growing role in the global commercial launch market** — Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

₹3,400 cr lies unclaimed in Karnataka bank accounts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Mangaluru

AN estimated Rs 3,400 crore has been lying unclaimed in bank accounts across Karnataka for more than a decade, officials revealed at the District Consultative Committee (DCC) and District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting held here on Wednesday.

Addressing the meeting, Arun Kumar, Assistant General Manager, RBI Bengaluru Regional Office, said the Reserve Bank of India has been implementing a special statewide campaign under the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF) for the past three months to reunite unclaimed deposits with their rightful owners. The campaign will continue until December 31, though depositors can approach banks to claim their money even after the deadline.

Kumar noted that nearly 80% of such accounts hold balances below Rs 10,000. Many of them are decades old, lack updated mobile numbers or KYC details, and in several cases, the original account holders are no longer alive. Updating mobile numbers and customer details has been taken up as the first step in the campaign. The unclaimed deposits include amounts in savings, fixed deposit and current accounts. Customers can check for unclaimed deposits through the UDGAM portal.

Dakshina Kannada Lead Bank District Chief Manager Kavitha Shetty said around Rs 140 crore remains unclaimed in nearly six lakh bank accounts in the district alone. So far, Rs 20 crore has been returned to depositors of 830 accounts under the DEAF scheme.

Dakshina Kannada MP Capt Brijesh Chowta stressed the need for a robust awareness drive, urging banks to proactively inform customers through pamphlets and direct outreach. He also expressed concern over delays in implementing welfare schemes and called for a clear action plan to strengthen delivery of flagship schemes such as PMJDY, PMJJBY, PMSBY and APY.

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Ending a 20-year political feud, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and MNS president Raj Thackeray forged an alliance on Wednesday for BMC polls | PTI | P12

Raid unearths ₹14.38cr DA from min's pvt secy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE Lokayukta police on Wednesday unearthed Rs 14.38 crore disproportionate assets (DA) allegedly amassed by Sarfaraz Khan, Director of Cooperative Audit, Department of Cooperation, who is now serving as private secretary to Housing and Minority Welfare Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan on OOD (on official duty).

Conducting simultaneous search at more than 13 places belonging to Khan, a Karnataka Administrative Service (KAS) officer, and his relatives, the Lokayukta police found that Khan owned Rs 14.38 crore DA, including sites, houses and land worth Rs 8.44 crore, jewels worth Rs 2.99 crore, and vehicles valued at Rs 1.64 crore.

Among the total DA, Khan owned Rs 8.44 crore immovable assets, including 4 houses, 37 acres of agricultural land and movable assets of Rs 5.93 crore, including fixed deposits in the bank of Rs 1.29 crore.

Responding to the Lokayukta raids, the minister said he is not aware of the details. "Sarfaraz comes from a wealthy family. I do not know why the raid was conducted," he added.

Jewellery seized from Sarfraz Khan's house

PROBE ON

Poachers kill 3 blackbucks near C'magaluru

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Chikkamagaluru

CARCASSES of three blackbucks were found at Kallenahali village near Basur blackbucks protected area in Kadur zone of Chikkamagaluru Regional Forest Division on Monday. According to sources, the blackbucks aged around two were shot dead by poachers.

It is alleged that local forest officials got the autopsy of the dead animals done in a hurried manner on Tuesday evening to hush up the matter.

People of the village suspect foul play as the blackbucks were found dead close to the anti-poaching camp at Basur.

The villagers alleged that the forest officials did not register any case. They did not even inform the local media about the incident.

Meanwhile, wildlife activists urged Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre to order a high-level investigation.

DCFO Ramesh Babu told *TNIE* that the blackbucks were found dead on revenue land and the carcasses had bullet injuries. Veterinarians conducted the autopsy on Tuesday evening and the carcasses were burnt, he said. Investigations are on to trace the poachers.

No fresh leases allowed for mining in the Aravallis

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

THE Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has directed states to completely ban new mining leases in the Aravalli Range, stretching from Delhi to Gujarat, to save them from unbridled mining activities.

The move follows reports that the Central Empowered Committee — established by the Supreme Court in 2002 and reconstituted in December 2023 — had contradicted a government-headed committee's recommendations on definition of the Aravallis.

The controversy centers around the Supreme Court accepting an Environment Ministry committee's proposal that landforms over 100 metres constitute "Aravalli hills".

Critics argue this new definition increases the range's vulnerability to mining. It is also believed the Forest Survey of India and the SC's amicus curiae had opposed this definition. Despite this, the Supreme Court accepted the ministry's 100-metre proposal on November 20.

The Ministry has now asked the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education to identify additional no-mining zones and preparing a management plan for "sustainable mining.

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said the Centre "is misleading the public."